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ABSTRACT

The under-representation of Asian American women in educational research and development is related to both sociocultural and historical barriers. Some of these barriers (racial and sexual discrimination, lack of role models, and lack of professional contacts) are shared by women of all ethnic minorities. There are also, however, unique barriers faced by Asian American women, including: the low status of women in Asian culture; linguistic and cultural barriers; and the myth of Asian American success, which has clouded a perception of Asian women's problems and has provided justification for their exploitation. The limited data available attest to the fact that, despite having higher educational levels than whites, Asian Americans are underemployed in terms of occupational and income level. Asians of both sexes are especially under-represented in psychology and the social sciences, including educational research, but women are even more underemployed and under-represented than men. Participation in educational research is essential because the field affects policies that have important implications for the lives of Asian Americans. Steps that need to be taken to increase Asian American women's participation in educational research include: Federal support of information collection regarding Asian Americans; identification of successful Asian American role models; the establishment of networks among women researchers; and an increased focus on developing language and qualitative skills among Asian Americans. (Author/GC)

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ASIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

BY

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ASIAN-AMERICAN WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

"It would not be surprising or inaccurate to say that the role of minorities is small and their status relatively low within the sphere of educational research and development (R&D) in the United States. There are comparatively few prominent minority members in the R&D community, and as a consequence, minorities have had little impact on a field that has large effects on minority people." Those were the opening remarks of Henry Frierson, Jr., in his article addressing the needs to modify the role and status of minorities in educational R&D in the October, 1980, issue of Educational Researcher. Although those remarks are pertinent to all minorities, female members are the minority among the ethnic minorities; and Henry Frierson's words are especially true in describing minority women's lack of involvement in educational research, the results of which shape the policymaking that affects them.

Asian-American women have had a relatively short history in this country. Next to American Indians, they are the minority with the smallest number yet the most diversified cultural and linguistic backgrounds. They are also the fastest growing minority, having doubled their population between 1970 and 1980. Their legal minority status has been recognized only recently, and as such they have not received the degree of legal protection and federal assistance accorded to other ethnic minorities in this country. The lack of representation of Asian-American women in educational R&D is related to a number of socio-cultural barriers. Some of these barriers are commonly shared by all women members of ethnic minorities, such as racial and sexual discrimination, lack of role models, and lack of access to the "Ol' Boys'" system. However, there are also unique barriers faced by Asian-American women. The commonly believed myth of Asian-American's success in this country has clouded the perception of their problems and has provided justification for political exploitation. The additional bondage of their cultural tradition in

which women assume low status in the family and society, asking nothing and expecting little, has also prevented them from equal participation in the professional occupations. Many Asian-American women face cultural and language barriers which enclose them in isolated islands, inaccessible to the fruit of opportunities provided in this society. In this age of racial and sexual consciousness, quite often Asian-American women are bypassed in the considerations of both racial and sexual equity. The women's movement at the present is white and middle-class, and it does not concern itself with the needs and problems of minority women. Since the Asian-American movement itself has been relatively new, the Asian-American women's concern has not become a focus within the Asian-American movement either.

The lack of statistics, information, and research on Asian-Americans documents the neglect toward Asian-American women and testifies to the need for their participation as educational researchers. In the process of writing this paper, the author was often frustrated by the lack of statistics and empirical data dealing with Asian-American women. Most of the statistics before 1970 were not categorized under an Asian-American caption. Of the few studies that did have Asian-Americans as entries, hardly any statistics were provided by sex. This paper, therefore, is a preliminary background study which, hopefully, will stimulate much needed empirical studies to identify Asian-American women researchers, to investigate their unique acculturation pattern, and to document their needs and problems.

The 1980 Census documented the population of Asian/Pacific-Americans as 3,500,635 among the total population of 226,504,825, a mere 1.5%, as compared to blacks, 11.7%; Hispanics, 6.4%; and American Indians, 0.6%. In the last ten years, Asian/Pacific-Americans doubled from 0.8% in 1970 to the present 1.5%, to become the fastest growing minority in this country. Asian/Pacific-Americans include Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai,

and other Southeast Asian descents. The inclusion of East Indians in this group is still inconsistent. Due to the disparity and diversity inherent in this group, this paper is mainly based upon the studies including Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, and Korean Americans. Very little information is available about the remaining Asian-Americans.

History

Chinese laborers were the first among the Asians to come to this country, dated to the middle of the eighteenth century. They came to work on railroads, in gold mines, or on plantations. As sojourners, and with no intention of staying, men came alone; there were very few Chinese women. In 1890, there were only 3,868 Chinese women as compared to 102,620 Chinese men. A series of prohibitive immigration laws, such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1924 Immigration Act, prevented the immigration of Chinese women and forced many Chinese men to return to China. Between 1882 and 1942, 14 bills and regulations were passed in Congress to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants. Many families were separated, resulting in a Chinese bachelors' society. Until today, there is still a disproportional ratio between men and women among the elderly Chinese over 60 (Pian, 1980).

Japanese were the second major Asian group to arrive in the United States. Just like the Chinese, Japanese men outnumbered women and worked as bachelor sojourners in this country. Unlike the Chinese, neither customs nor immigration law prohibited Japanese men from bringing wives to America. The first wave of picture brides arrived in America around 1910. In 1920, there were 22,193 Japanese women to 111,010 Japenese men. The Issei (first generation) settled in this country and brought forth Nisei (second generation). The women worked alongside their men, in the field, harvesting the crops, keeping house and raising children (Gee, 1975). However, the subsequent Immigration Act of 1924

barred all immigration from Japan and caused a temporary disturbance to domestic life as a result of unbalanced male-to-female ratio. In 1924, 42.5% of all Japanese men in the United States were bachelors.

Few Koreans immigrated to this country before the twentieth century. Most of the Korean-Americans are fairly recent immigrants. On the other hand, Filipinos were defined as "nationals" or "wards" of the United States and needed no visas to enter the United States. They came in large numbers in the beginning of the twentieth century to work in the California and Hawaii farms. They were the only Asians not excluded from the prohibitive immigration statutes. In 1934, with the passage of the Philippine Independence Act, Philippine immigration was curtailed to a quota of 50 persons per year.

During and after World War II, a series of legislative acts were passed to ease the racial discrimination in immigration and naturalization, and to facilitate the entry of war brides, fiancees, and G.I. children. The 1952 McCarren-Walter Act made immigration open to all races and designated annual quotas of 105 persons each to China, Japan, and the Philippines. All these new policies opened doors for the Asian-American immigrants. From 1948 to 1953, Chinese women consisted of almost 90% of all Chinese immigrants.

Since the 1965 Immigration Act became effective in 1968, equal consideration for immigration to this country has been given to the Asians, a privilege which has been traditionally reserved for Europeans. Half of all the new Asian immigrants arrived after that time, and a high percentage of them were women. Filipinos have been the largest Asian-American immigration group, followed by Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

The history of immigration has shaped the characteristics of the contemporary Asian-American women and make them distinctive from other minority women in this country. With the exception of Japanese Americans, some of which are the third generation in this new land (Sansei), the majority of Asian-American

women are the first generation newcomers in the United States. A high percentage of them are foreign-born immigrants. Unlike their predecessors who had concentrated in the crowded Chinatowns of several major cities, nearly half of the newly arrived Asians were diffused into other regions. The educational levels and occupational skills differed greatly among Asian-American women. Some had no education and were completely illiterate in English, while some others were skilled professionals with advanced training and education. This disparity was the result of the selective nature of the immigration laws, as some came as refugees or relatives of United States citizens, and others came only when they were professionals, scientists and artists of exceptional ability, or skilled workers in occupations for which there is an American labor shortage, such as medical personnel.

Myths of Asian-American Success

In his article on "The Myth of Asian American Success and Its Educational Ramifications," Ki-Taek Chun documented the origin and the prevalence of the "success" myth, and provided a critical analysis of the indicators of the "success." In the 1960s, when the black Americans' struggle for civil rights occupied the nation's attention, the public media presented the portrait of Asian-Americans as a "model" minority. They were presented as an uncomplaining minority, who overcame difficult racial and socio-economic barriers, winning wealth and respect by their own hard work, with no help from anyone else. This myth had become an established "fact" with the implications that not only Asian-Americans should be models for other minorities, but that Asian-Americans needed no assistance.

However, the measures used as indicators for success--education, income, and occupation--have to be examined in the cultural context or they may be misleading or abused. In terms of eduational achievement, education has been

traditionally revered in Asian culture; they pursue education at a great cost. Furthermore, Asian-Americans realize the harsh reality of social injustice; they know that they have to be more qualified or have more education than white people in order to hold the same jobs. In addition, large numbers of Asian immigrants came into this country as professionals with high levels of education. Many came as students; in order to keep their visas valid, they had to enroll in schools continuously. All these factors have contributed to the fact that there are (a) a greater proportion of college graduates among Chinese and Japanese Americans than among the total white population, and (b) Japanese-Americans ahead of whites in terms of median grade completed (Schmid and Nobbe, 1965).

The commonly held belief assumes that schooling has a substantial income value for those who obtain it; and, therefore, high levels of education will lead to professional occupations with great incomes, chances for promotion, and job security. This assumption may be true for white people; however, it certainly does not hold for the Asian-American. Fogel (1966) noticed that the Asian-Americans' income relative to their educational achievement has been deficient for at least 20 years. As can be seen from Table 1, the 1970 Census shows that educational attainment does not pay for Asian-Americans, especially Asian-American women; and this gap increases at the higher end of the educational ladder. The 1978 report by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Social Indicators of Equality for Minorities and Women further confirmed the extent of this income inequality after education has been taken into consideration.

Asian-Americans appear to have higher educational levels than whites. However, their investment in education has not paid off; they are underemployed. Asian-American women are even more underemployed than their men. Despite their high educational attainment (27% of Filipino women hold college degrees,

TABLE 1

INCOME OF CHINESE WOMEN COMPARED WITH
OTHER WOMEN AND MEN
U.S., 1970

	% with income of $10,000 or more	
High School Graduates	Male	Female
White	32.5%	2.4%
Black	10.4	0.9
Chinese	20.9	2.6
College Graduates		
White	59.6	10.2
Black	35.3	11.2
Chinese	38.3	9.3
Postgraduates		
White	67.1	27.7
Black	53.0	34.2
Chinese	50.9	13.3

Source: Table 24 of B. L. Sung, Chinese American Manpower and Employment, p. 94. Based on 1970 Census data, Sung also states: "One third of the Chinese females who have ever attended college are in clerical work. More school does not mean better pay for the Chinese."

the highest among all ethnic groups, men or women), their median income in 1973 fell below that of white men and women (see Table 2).

Table 3 compares the earnings of Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese women with those of white women in the San Francisco-Oakland area. The proportion of Asian women who graduate from college is considerable and matches or exceeds that of white women. Despite the high educational attainment levels, the proportion who earn $10,000 or more is pitifully small: between two and four per cent.

Fong and Cabezas (1980) asked the question of why Asian-American women fall behind white women in income as their levels of education ascend. Did something happen in the educational process that discriminated against them or that prepared them less well to compete in the job market? Are differences in assertiveness or occupational barriers responsible for the earning differences? Could there be racial discriminations not encountered by white women?

The employment picture of Asian-Americans with doctoral degrees revealed another area of inequity. The proportion of Asian-American doctorate awardees with definite job offers was always lower than that of whites and all the other minorities, such as blacks, American Indians, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. As for Asian-American females holding earned doctorates, they were the lowest of all groups to receive job offers (Gilford and Snyder, 1977).

Gilford and Snyder also found that among doctoral scientists and engineers employed in higher education, Asian-Americans received the lowest median annual salary in the 1970s as compared to whites and other minorities.

Chun therefore concluded: "Compared to the majority and to other minority groups, then more Asian Americans go to college and ultimately earn their doctoral degrees; but upon graduation, fewer job opportunities are available to

TABLE 2

MEDIAN INCOME OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN
AS COMPARED TO WHITE MEN AND WHITE WOMEN IN 1973

White Men	White Women	Filipino Women	Japanese Women	Chinese Women	Korean Women
$7,391	$4,777	$3,513	$3,236	$2,686	$2,741

Source: 1975 U.S. Census

TABLE 3

EDUCATIONAL AND EARNINGS COMPARISON
OF ASIAN WOMEN AND WHITE WOMEN IN
THE SAN FRANCISCO-OAKLAND SMSA

	Japanese	Chinese	Filipino	White
Per cent earning more than $10,000*	4.36	2.49	2.15	5.27
Per cent college graduates**	28.3	23.0	36.5	24.0

*Over age 16 for Asian women; over age 18 for white women.

**For ages 25-34.

Source: 1970 Census.

them, and even when they are employed, their salaries are lower. The emerging picture of Asian-American doctorates is not one of success, but rather one of unrewarded effort and frustration" (p. 7).

Under-representation in Social Sciences

In 1973, a National Science Foundation report on minorities and women found that most of employed Asian-American doctorates concentrated on fields such as engineering, mathematics, and physical sciences. On the other hand, in psychology and social sciences, the proportion of Asian-Americans fell far below that of the population and other minorities. The greatest discrepancy existed in the area of psychology. In 1973, only 2.9% of Asian-American doctorates were employed in psychology as compared to 11.5% for the total population. Gilford and Snyder (1977) supported this trend with additional current data.

The high proportion of Asian-Americans in engineering, mathematics and physical sciences should not be taken at face value nor assumed to be the same for both Asian-American males and females. The National Academy of Sciences (1973) found that over the four preceeding years, there was not a single woman Asian-American doctoral engineer. The description of each sex separately within each ethnic group is necessary rather than to generalize across the racial/ethnic group as a whole.

The under-representation of Asian-Americans in fields of social sciences, psychology, and education, however, holds true for both men and women who tend to specialize in careers in which quantitative, nonlinguistic skills are at a premium, and to avoid areas in which the major vehicle for professional activities relies either upon language usage or upon personal contacts. Education and educational research, as specialties, have been fields with very few Asian-Americans, men or women.

Although somewhat different from the AERA 1975 Survey report which indicated 2.5% oriental or Asian-Americans, Yee's (1976) tabulation resulted in a 1.0% membership with oriental surnames. Approximately 0.5% of the APA's Division of Educational Psychology membership was Asian-Americans.

As compared to Asian-American engineers, chemists and medical personnel, "the percentage for Asian American educational researchers seems minuscule indeed" (Yee, 1976). However, a more careful tabulation, to include both Asian-American men and women, is needed in order to provide an accurate number of Asian-Americans in the areas of social sciences and education.

Cultural and Language Barriers

Since a high proportion of Asian American women are immigrants, cultural and language barriers can be serious enough to prevent their entry into the educational research arena. Even for native-born Asian-Americans, disciplines such as education, social sciences, and educational research, which require strength in language ability and sensitivity to the cultural patterns of the contemporary society, have been threatening to them. Drastic linguistic and cultural differences existed between English and Asiatic languages, and Eastern and Western ways of life forced Asian-Americans into professions in which social interactions are minimal, and in which language skills were not at a premium.

There are additional cultural barriers inherent in the Asiatic heritages of Asian-American women's background. Traditionally, Chinese women were taught to serve their fathers in their youth, husbands in marriage, and sons in old age. Women were taught by Confucius' ethics to be passive and submitted themselves to the authority of men and duties of the family. Japanese women were also duty- and obligation-bound to the responsibilities of their families. They were expected to make sacrifices for the sake of their children and husbands.

Their joy and fulfillment in life were derived from the vicarious living of their children and husbands' achievements. Osako (1980) reviewed the kinship system in China, Japan, and the Philippines in relation to the understanding of Asian women's achievement. In contrast to the American family, the kinship system in these three groups shared much in common, such as male dominance, division of household tasks by sex, separate male and female domains of authority, greater affection in parent-child ties relative to husband-wife bonds, and the priority of collective family goals over individuals'. Because of the great diversity inherent in the Asian-American women as a group, great care should be taken not to generalize these traditional values to all members of the group, in order to avoid the perpetuation of the stereotypes of Asian women that are already in existence.

On the other hand, "What happens when the world in which an adult finds herself, differs in important ways from the world for which her upbringing has prepared her?" (Fillmore and Cheong, 1980). The different cultural expectations for an Asian woman in her early socialization underlies potential conflict in self-fulfilling achievement in a competitive Western world during her adult life. This early socialization inhibited individual development and caused later family-career role conflict which manifested in her lack of self-confidence that her abilities could measure up to her own very high performance standard. Negative self-esteem in relation to her skills and work habits became a rationalization to accept one's role of subservience and exacting responsibility in the family hierarchy. Properly socialized, women do not question the fairness of the sex differences and accept as proper their inferior status. Such a submissive and acquiescent attitude does not prepare Asian-American women for the professional world which is highly competitive and which rewards those who are assertive and confident about their abilities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Asian-American women are the neglected group in social sciences and education. The lack of concern stems partly from the "myth" that Chinese- and Japanese-Americans are the model minorities and need no outside assistance. Part of this lack of concern stems from the distorted impression of oriental people that they are inscrutable and that they resist the attempt to become assimilated into this society. This lack of concern manifested in the lack of information and research studies including Asian-American women. Hirata (1980) surveyed documents between 1895 and 1975 in the four oldest American sociological journals and counted 137 articles (less than 1.0%) including information on Asian-Americans; the majority occurred in the two decades around the Second World War.

Asian-Americans, both men and women, are under-represented in educational research, a field that selects areas for study, collects data, analyzes results, and affects the policymaking which has tremendous implications for the lives of Asian-Americans. Asian-American women have their additional cultural and socialization bondage; they will need additional assistance in order to participate equally in the arena of educational research. The following recommendations may assist their entry into this significant professional field:

1. The federal government, various professional organizations in social sciences, and the educational R&D arena itself should recognize the neglect Asian-Americans have experienced in this country. They should encourage the development of more research studies and the collection of more information on Asian-Americans as a whole and Asian-American women especially. Census and statistics should always include Asian-Americans as a minority group for data analysis and should provide information according to Asian-American men and women. Stereotypes usually result from ignorance and limited exposure. Myths can be expelled only by solid data.

2. Successful Asian-American women researchers should be identified as role models. Their acculturation patterns and achievement motivation, their unique problems and needs, their strengths and contributions to research should be studied to derive a success profile which may provide the conditions needed to assist the entry of their sisters into educational R&D.

3. Networks among Asian-American women researchers need to be established. Since their number is small, their power is weak. The network may provide them with the support for political actions. The network will also facilitate communication and allow the sharing of research ideas and cooperation in joint research. Mentor arrangements, in which junior researchers work under the supervision of senior and experienced researchers, can also be established through such a network.

4. Language barriers can be overcome by concentrated training programs starting early in the public school throughout adult and continuing education classes to assist Asian-American women to develop speaking, reading, and writing skills in English. School counselors should be trained to develop sensitivity to the unique problems Asian-American girls and women often face in adjusting to drastically different cultural and linguistic worlds. Assertiveness training, public speaking skills, social skills, job acquisition skills, career awareness--all are urgently needed for Asian-American women. Asian-Americans' strength in mathematics and quantitative reasoning (Lesser, et al., 1965) can have great applicability in behavioral sciences and social research. Counselors should not automatically channel Asian-Americans into engineering and natural sciences based upon their quantitative skills.

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